

THE
OCCASIONAL PREACHER.

NUMBER II.

THE
AGGRAVATED FOLLY
OF THEM that
D E S P I S E
The Counsels and Warnings of
REVEALED RELIGION;
Whom to
F O R S A K E, is L I F E.

Isaiah viii. 20, 22. *To the Law and to the Testimony: If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them. And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to Darkness.*

ii Cor. iv. 3, 4. But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not.

L O N D O N:

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THE
OCCASIONAL TEACHER

NUMBER

THE
AGGRAVATED FOLLY

OF THEM

DESPISE



REVEALED

WHICH IS

FORSAKE A LIFE

THESE ARE THE FACTS OF THE CASE AS THEY ARE
STATED BY THE PARTIES CONCERNED IN THE
CASE. THE FACTS ARE AS FOLLOWS: THE
PARTY WHOSE NAME IS GIVEN IN THE
TITLE OF THIS PAMPHLET, WAS A
PERSON OF REPUTATION AND
STANDING IN THE COMMUNITY AT THE
TIME WHEN THE FACTS WERE
FIRST BROUGHT TO THE
PUBLIC NOTICE. HE WAS
A PERSON OF GREAT
INTELLECTUAL AND
MORAL QUALITIES, AND
WAS WIDELY
RESPECTED BY ALL
WHO KNEW HIM.

L O W D O N
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T H E
Occasional Preacher.

Number II.

The *aggravated Folly* of them that despise the *Counsels and Warnings of Revealed Religion*; to forsake whom, is Life.

Proverbs IX. 6.

“Forsake the Foolish, and live.”

THE eternal Wisdom of God, concerning which such great and glorious things are said in the *chapter foregoing*, we find represented in *this chapter* as calling to the simple and unwise, to consider and lay to heart the instructions which are sent from Heaven. Wisdom is described, in the manner of a *Parable*, building a magnificent Palace, and there making rich Provision for all that would accept her Proposals. She sendeth forth her Messengers to publish these proposals, and to invite the sons of men to her House, that they might partake of its Entertainments.

By this Wisdom, we are to understand *Divine Revelation* as it hath respect to Him

who is the *principal Subject* of it : " Who is
 " also the *true light* which lighteth every
 " man that cometh into the world *." The
 Eternal *Logos*, who was in the beginning with
 God, and who was God, is the great Con-
 veyor or Mediator of all divine knowledge
 and understanding communicated to the Chil-
 dren of Men.

The *Palace of Wisdom*, which is described
 in the 1st v. of the chapter where my text is,
 plainly refers to some Building of God amongst
 men, distinct from the Cities and Kingdoms
 of the Earth. The *Provisions* in that palace,
 are evidently intended to represent the Enter-
 tainments of Wisdom ; which are, therefore,
 not sensual but intellectual and spiritual enter-
 tainments.

The Invitations sent forth to the high
 Places of the City to call in the simple, and
 such as want understanding, agree with the
 gospel method of inviting sinners to come into
 the church and Kingdom of Christ ; only allow-
 ing for some difference in the *Inviters*, which
 was needful to preserve the Decorum of the
Parable, according to *Solomon's* manner of
 writing.

The Parable in the xxii of *Matthew* con-
 cerning the *Marriage-Feast* for the *King's son* ;
 and the *servants* being sent forth to call in
 Guests to the wedding ; compared with the
 Parable in the xiv *Luke* where the messen-

* John i. 9.

gers are sent forth into the *streets and lanes* of the city; do both fully accord with the Invitations and Pleadings of Wisdom, in the verses before the text. The form of the Invitation is the same, "Come eat of my Bread, and drink of the Wine which I have mingled." To this we are literally call'd in the gospel Church.

Now, in order to partake of the *Feast* or *Supper*, which heavenly Wisdom hath provided, and to which infinite Grace and Love invite us, our Text requires that we *forsake the Foolish*. By which expression, we are to understand the Despisers of *Reveal'd Religion*, and such as fall in with them in any *evil courses* and ways of life †. For the *foolish* are opposed to them, that *go in the way of understanding*, in the latter part of the verse I am upon. And if you look a little beyond the text, *wisdom*, and the *way of understanding*, are thus described together; "The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

By forsaking them that *cast off the Reverence* which is due to God, and to those things which he is pleased to reveal and require, we *shall live*: And by acquainting ourselves with holy things, and with holy good persons, and walking agreeably to them, we shall go in the *way of understanding*. Of this, some other time.

† See the Sermon N^o 1. on the Scripture account of the *foolish*.

I now propose to shew from the former part of the verse (which is, Forake the foolish and live) Two things ;

I. The great and *aggravated Folly* of them that reject the offers and discoveries of *Reveal'd Religion*; which is indeed the voice of *heavenly wisdom*, calling to the children of men. And then shew,

II. What is *that Life* which *Wisdom* proposeth, upon mens forsaking the counsels and ways of sinners.

And so conclude with some Inferences.

I. I am to shew the great and aggravated Folly of them that reject the offers and discoveries of revealed Religion.

This is not only to despise men, but God. It is not merely to cast Contempt upon human reasonings, but upon the voice of heavenly wisdom it self, calling to the children of men. Thus considered, it is a folly the most aggravated of all other. For,

1. It is a most *conceited* folly.

The Scriptures have such marks of truth and goodness, authority and power, as no other writings have. They that have diligently search'd the sacred Records, have not only declared their own firm persuasion of the truths there revealed ; but the great goodness of the things therein contained, as every way conducive

conducive to promote both the honour of God, and the happiness of man.

And many *wise* and *great* men have testify'd the power and authority of the word of God, in its effects upon their own hearts and lives, as well as in their accounts of the mighty changes hereby wrought in others.

They have also, by the fairest and most diligent reasonings proved the excellency and divine authority of the Scriptures, from those *external* evidences which have sometimes been sufficient to convince very violent opposers.

Is it not then the most *unreasonable conceit*, for any man to set at nought the understandings, or the honesty of all these witnesses, because his understanding is of another cast, and his reasonings thro' unbelief have taken a different turn? Must no understandings be sound and right, on the side of religion, because they cannot remove all the unbeliever's Prejudices against it? With these despisers of the Scripture, none must pass for men of ingenuity and good understanding, but those that bend their discourses, on the *Scripture it self*, to their ways of thinking. Let these mens understandings be what they will, it is certain, that their *conceit* is their folly.

But this conceit does not only appear odious, in their setting at nought the understandings, and the integrity, of some of the wisest and best men that ever lived in the world: It goes so far, as to impute those *mighty works*

works which no human power could ever effect, to delusion, or to some evil cause, tho' they were wrought to serve purposes *undeniably good*, and to shew that such as wrought them were indeed commissioned of God.

Some of these men are hereupon led to make a *jest* of those very things, which are really of the most solemn nature, and of the highest importance; and in doing this, their conceit bids defiance to all the serious addresses and solicitations of wisdom. No tempers are so vain, and contemptuous of others, as theirs who reject the counsel of God against themselves. These Instances of Conceit aggravate mens folly in matters of Religion, in proportion to the great concerns of it being above all other concerns in the World.

2. It is a most *contemptible* folly, notwithstanding all the conceit that attends it.

Indeed the conceit is one thing that renders it contemptible, and in some cases proves a very good antidote to the poison that such revilers of the scripture would otherwise spread.

There is no folly so contemptible as that which sets itself against a Revelation and Commission from God. For that reasoning of *Gamaliel* will eternally hold good, in the vindication of Christianity, "That if this counsel and this work be of God, it cannot be overthrown;" and haply they that attempt
it

it (let their pretences be thought ever so reasonable) will be found even to fight against God. This is no better, than for a potsherd of the earth to lift up it self against him that formed it; or for derived wisdom, to boast against that fountain of light and knowledge, from whence all wisdom flows.

There are three things that render Folly highly contemptible. Namely, when it lifts up it self against a power that can easily *crush* it; and next when it sets a man against his *own mercy*, or makes him turn away from it; and then when it goes about to lessen and blaspheme the authority, wisdom, and goodness which it hath despised. On all these accounts, they that reject a Revelation from Heaven, shew a foolishness that renders them contemptible. They exalt themselves against the highest authority, and the greatest power in the universe; a power that can easily destroy them: And against that wisdom which must, and will, be justify'd in all its proceedings: And they set themselves against their *own mercy*, in rejecting the infinitely kind and gracious offers of the Gospel. And when they have thus affronted both the majesty and mercy of Heaven, then they blaspheme the authority and grace which they have foolishly rejected. But this hath stedfastly been believed, from the patriarchal to the apostolical age, " That judgment shall be executed, so as to
 " convince all that are ungodly among men,
 B " not

“ not only of all their ungodly deeds, but
 “ of all their hard speeches which ungodly
 “ sinners have spoken *.” How justly doth
 wisdom say to them that reject her calls and
 offers, as in the 1st chapter of this book of
Proverbs: “ Because I have called, and ye
 “ refused, — ye have set at nought all my
 “ counsel, and would none of my reproof;
 “ I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock
 “ when your fear cometh; when your fear
 “ cometh as desolation, and your destruction
 “ as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish
 “ cometh upon you.”

In the day of God's righteous judgment,
 how inexpressibly contemptible will the folly
 of those be, who have despised the rule of
 Judgment, the provisions of Grace, and all
 the warnings and reproofs of that wisdom
 which is from above ?

3. That which further aggravates the folly
 I am speaking of, is, that it is an *incorrigible*
 folly.

It is frequently observed of those that de-
 spise the principles of reveal'd religion, after
 they have been brought up in the knowledge
 of them, that they become more vilely pro-
 phane in their speeches, and more dissolute
 in their manners, than any other sort of peo-
 ple. Having destroy'd the force of those
 things which are the most awful and impor-

* Jud. ver. 14. 15.

tant, there are no other things of equal weight and moment that can be urged in their stead. It is notorious in fact, that there is no folly so incorrigibly obstinate as *Theirs*, who reject scripture counsels, and break off all the bands of religion. All their notions of liberty run into licentiousness, and they become impatient of the wisest, kindest regulations of their conduct.

Some perhaps may preserve a regard to the restraints of *human Laws*, so far as they are concerned to provide for this present life: ('Tho' it very often happens in the course of providence, and by the just judgment of God, that men who cast off his fear and a reverence to his word, do also cast off all fear of the magistrate and of the penalties he hath power to inflict.) But he that despiseth the Scripture, however he may shew a regard to his present worldly interest, yet becomes unreclaimable by any of those methods which divine and spiritual wisdom doth prescribe.

The Apostle goes so far as to say " It is impossible to renew such men again unto repentance, who were once enlighten'd, and were partakers of the holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come." For how should those who deny the *renovation* of the *Spirit*, ever come under the power of it? Instead of seeking earnestly this *heavenly gift*, they learn to make a jest of his operations on the soul of man. How should they be

brought to repentance who reject the *good word of God*, which is the great and standing instrument by which a renewing spirit produceth repentance in the hearts of men? They are not to be reclaimed by lower motives, who cease to have any awful regard to the *world to come*, or to the powerful arguments and motives fetch'd from thence.

The hardness of heart to which a contempt of the Scripture leads many, is a sad proof of the obstinate folly to which they are given up by the righteous judgment of God. "Their Pride testifieth to their faces, and being filled with their own devices, they do not return to the Lord their God*." Unless you forsake Those that you see are arrived to this heighth of foolishness, you are in danger of having your own principles weakned; or at least of having the power of sin excited in yourselves, so as to make your struggles with profane and sinful suggestions more difficult.

4. The *folly* of those who harden themselves against all the Instructions and Calls of heavenly Wisdom, is *finally destructive*.

In propheticall language God declareth "I will bereave them of Children [or whatsoever is dear to them] I will destroy my People, sith they return not from their way†." Yea this foolishness will end, according to the natural Course of things, in ruin and misery. "Fools

* Hof. vii. 10. † Jer. xv. 7.

"die for want of Wisdom*." And the "*Companion* of fools shall be destroyed†." The destruction of them who harden themselves, and one another, in rejecting the reproofs of Wisdom, is very sudden and remediless. "He that being often reprov'd, hardneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy‡." I quote these Scriptures, as so many express declarations of the wisdom from above, to shew what the despisers of it must certainly expect, if it should be indeed from God. It will prove too hard for them after all their resistances, and obstinate contempt of it.

The language of it upon its finally prevailing, is such, that they who oppose it ought to be very sure its threatnings shall pass for nothing, before they go about to harden their hearts in a disregard to that wrath of God, which is revealed from heaven against the unbelief and unrighteousness of men. To run a risque in this case is great foolishness, because if the Word of God be true, "He that hardneth his Heart, shall fall into mischief§." And, "the wicked shall be turned into Hell, with all the nations that forget God*." Our Saviour says, concerning all them to whom the Gospel is preached, "Be ye sure of this, that the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you: But I say unto you that it shall be more tolera-

* Prov. x. 21. † Prov. xiii. 20. ‡ Prov. xxix. 1.
§ Prov. xxviii. 14. * Psal. ix. 17.

“ ble for *Sodom* in the day of Judgment, than
 “ for such as reject the Word of this King-
 “ dom*.” Add this now, as the End of them
 that despise revealed religion, to which the
 other instances of their foolishness bring them;
 and surely where there are any remains of the
 fear of God, or of an ingenuous disposition
 of Mind, all such will forsake these foolishly
 adventurous men.

The Sum of what has been said is this; there
 is no folly so *contemptible*, as that, which ex-
 alts itself against the divine Majesty, and his
 declared sufficiently-attested *Will* and *Laws*;
 rejecting at the same time the *great Salvation*
 proposed by him, tho’ it be the fruit and effect
 of infinite Compassion and Love; and then
 blaspheming and endeavouring to cast asper-
 sions upon the whole Scheme; and to lessen
 the Wisdom and Goodness of him that formed
 it, tho’ both are worthy of the highest Adora-
 tion in heaven and earth.

When we consider that there must be an
original Lawgiver, or there would never have
 been any Laws; and that *God* is this *one Law-*
giver, who is *able to save* and to *destroy*: And
 that upon the breach of God’s Laws, the Act
 of *Pardon* and *Grace* must come from the
 same supreme Authority; and must be accepted
 upon the Sovereign’s own terms, or else every
 Criminal must suffer in proportion to the con-
 tempt and hardness of heart, with which he has

* Luke x. 11, 12.

set himself against the Wisdom and Word of God; when I say we duly consider these points, how *contemptible* is such folly, as that of despising the Laws and the Grace of God? And yet there is no folly so *conceited*, as that which leads men to talk against the scriptures. There is no folly that so much *hardens itself* against religious Counsels and reproofs, as this. And therefore no folly more certainly *destructive* in the end; nor any destruction more grievous and aggravated, than theirs who reject the Scripture, if it shall be found at last to be the wisdom of God.

Indeed this is sufficiently evident, at present, to men that will consult the Scriptures with care throughout, and observe the reference which one part hath to another, provided that they have a sincere desire to do the Will of God. *For if any man will do his Father's Will, our Saviour saith, He shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self**. But the truth is, that men are more intent upon having their *own Wills*, and upon fulfilling the desires of their own minds and of their flesh, than upon knowing and obeying the *Will* of God. Life therefore depends upon, forsaking the counsels and ways of them, that make light of revealed religion, and that deny the Scriptures to be the wisdom of God. This brings me to the

* John vii. 17.

II. General head, To shew what *is that Life* which wisdom proposeth, and calls us to, in forsaking the foolish.

In short, it is to *live* in a way quite contrary to them; and in so doing, to look for all that happiness which will both *accompany* and *reward*, a course of obedience to the word of God. *Forsake the foolish and live.*

This may be considered, both as a *precept*, or *direction* how we are to act, when we separate from the counsels and ways of profane sinful men; and also as a *motive* and *encouragement* to exert all our vigour, and best powers, in a course of Religion.

I. Consider it as a *command*, that we should not only forsake the disobedient, but that we should *live as God would have us to do.*

We must not only quit profane and atheistical conversation, but we must study and follow the revelations which God hath given us from Heaven. The words of the Psalmist are remarkable to this purpose: "Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer *."

They that live in sensual pleasures are very properly said to be *dead while they live.* As to any of the valuable purposes of life (either usefulness at present, or providing for an hereafter)

* Psal. xvii.

they might as well be among the dead as the living. In this style the Apostle speaks when he saith, "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." When the word of God calls upon us *to live*, it must therefore be understood of spending life in a way suitable to the reasonable powers with which God hath endued us, walking in his light, and observing the rules which his wisdom sets before us. This teacheth us to live *soberly, righteously, and godly*, in opposition to them who live in ungodliness, intemperance, and worldly lusts. And he that says this as he ought to do, "Depart from me ye *evil doers*, for I will keep the Commandments of my God," may look to God himself, who *shews* him the way of life, to *uphold* him in it. "Uphold me according to *thy word*, that I may live, and let me not be ashamed of my hope *." This shews that to *live*, is to worship God, and pray to him, in opposition to the profane contempt of divine institutions, and the prayerless conduct of men that reject God's word.

But then the language of our prayers, must be always conformable to such an address as this: "The righteousness of thy Testimonies is everlasting, give me understanding and I shall live." We must pray to him who hath given us his testimonies, whose

* Psal. cxix. v. 115, 116.

righteousness is everlasting; that he would also give us *understanding* to know and observe his testimonies upon this very consideration, That they contain the rules of *eternal* righteousness.

2. When it is said forsake the foolish, and *live*, we may consider this as a *motive* and *encouragement* to exert all the vigour of life in a course of religion. Thus we should contend earnestly for the Faith *once deliver'd* to the saints; and be ready to render a reason of the hope that is in us. We should love the Lord our God with all our mind, heart and strength; and should be steadfast and unmoveable in all good works. We should beware lest being led away by the error of the wicked, we should fall from our own steadfastness. In short, we should act with that spirit, and firmness, which becomes those that seek for *glory* and *immortality*. This is to *live* in the noblest sense, and to this we are encouraged by the happiness pointed out in this expression. We *shall live* in the following respects.

(1) We shall know wherein *Life truly consists*.

Have no communication with the despisers of heavenly wisdom, no fellowship with their evil and unfruitful works, and you will soon find so much profit and pleasure in the ways of wisdom, as shall enable you to say with a peculiar emphasis and satisfaction "Now I live." When "wisdom thus entereth into thine heart,
" and

“ and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul,
 “ discretion shall preserve thee, under-
 “ standing shall keep thee. That great Lord,
 “ who giveth wisdom, shall teach thee to un-
 “ derstand righteousness and judgment and
 “ equity ; yea every good path *.

(2) They that forsake the foolish shall live,
 as hereby they may *prolong life*.

Loose and vicious men do very often short-
 en their days, by their follies and vices ;
 while those that break off from them, tho’
 before they do so they are near to death, yet
 through the divine mercy, when they have
 turned to him in earnest prayer, they have
 been delivered. “ Fools because of their
 “ transgression, and because of their iniqui-
 “ ties are afflicted ; their soul abhorreth
 “ all manner of meat, and they draw near
 “ unto the gates of death : Then they cry
 “ unto the Lord in their trouble, he saveth
 “ them out of their distresses. He sends his
 “ word and healeth them, and delivereth them
 “ from their destructions †.” The chapter
 where my text is, declares ‡, that natu-
 ral life shall be lengthen’d, by following the
knowledge of the holy. For to such, wisdom
 saith, “ By me thy days shall be multiplied,
 “ and the years of thy life shall be encreased.”

(3) They that forsake the counsels and
 ways of sinners shall *live*, as hereby life shall
be blessed and sweetned to them, thro’ their de-

* Prov. ii. 9, 10, 11. † Psal. cvii. 17—20. ‡ ver. 11.

light in the law of God. " Blessed is the
 " man that walketh not in the counsel of
 " the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of
 " sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scorn-
 " ful. But his delight is in the law of the
 " Lord, and in his law doth he meditate
 " day and night. And he shall be like a
 " tree planted by the Rivers of water, that
 " bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his
 " leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever
 " he doth shall prosper *." His fruit shall
 be produced seasonably, according to the dif-
 ferent ages of life, and the times that pass
 over him. Thus shall he prosper during life,
 and life shall be continued as long as it is a
 real blessing.

(4) When *this life* ends, it shall be exchanged
 for a *better*. Forsake the foolish, and *live for ever*.

When the end of the wicked is to
 be cut off, and to *perish for ever with-
 out any regarding it*; the end of the per-
 fect and upright man, who has made the
 word of God the guide and pleasure of his life,
 will be to enter *into peace*. He shall go to those
 regions of light and life, where all his own
 lamented follies and imperfections shall be done
 away, and where no foolish despisers of God
 and religion shall ever come: Where tempta-
 tions, and troubles, shall be no more; and where
 life shall be enjoy'd without any decay, or any
 mixtures of those disorders that attend this

* Psal. i. beginning.

mortal state. All things that can be included in the notion of *life*, will then complete the felicity of those who have formed their lives on earth according to God's word; for in Heaven there will be *fulness* of joy, and pleasures for *evermore*.

Now if there be any thing desirable, in knowing wherein *Life truly consists*, in this present world; and in having it *prolonged* and *blessed* with prosperity, while it continues fruitful and useful; and if there be any thing to engage our minds, in the glorious prospects of *immortality* and *eternal happiness* in the world to come; these things should lead us to forsake the despisers of that wisdom, which hath most clearly made known, both this felicity, and the way to it.

I shall now conclude with three Inferences from what has been said.

I. We may infer, that the *great* and *reputedly wise* men of this world, are often found to be *fools* in God's account.

All that set themselves against a *divine revelation*, and attempt to destroy the authority of the gospel, and scoff at them who live in obedience to the institutions and precepts of it, are among the fools described at *Corinth*, upon the planting of Christianity there. Of these we have an account in St. Paul's first letter to the *Corinthians*. "Ye see your calling, brethren,
how

“ how that not many wise men after the
 “ flesh, not many mighty, not many noble
 “ are called *.” As to those wise, mighty
 and noble, their wisdom and religion was of
 their *own* devising and framing, after whom the
 Deists now copy. But nevertheless, in the suc-
 cess and power of the gospel, “ God made fool-
 “ ish the wisdom of this world;” and no
 doubt but he will still do so, in establishing
 his counsel, and in doing *all his pleasure* †.
 He will make good his word and promises,
 to the time of Christ’s future glorious appearing,
 and the immortality that shall follow. This
 is stiled by the author to the *Hebrews*, “ the
 “ immutability of his counsel ‡.”

For men to treat such counsels with *derision*,
 must doubtless be very great foolishness; and
 such as exposeth them to the *derision* of Hea-
 ven, that their scorn and hatred may be
 returned upon themselves. This is put very
 strongly by the *Psalmist*, in his prophetick
 view of the Kingdom of Christ. “ The
 “ kings of the earth set themselves, and the
 “ rulers take counsel together against the
 “ Lord, and against his anointed; saying, let
 “ us break their bands asunder, and cast away
 “ their cords from us.” As if they had said,
 let us have nothing to do with any pretended
 revelations from Heaven, let us be held by
 no such kind of Government, but cast away

* 1 Cor. i. 20, 26, &c. † Isai. xlv. 10. ‡ Heb. vi. 17.

all its cords of restraint, with all its Laws. Hereupon, he that *sitteth in the Heavens* is said to treat their impotent folly, with *contempt* and *scorn*, as they have treated his word. "He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision*." This hath evidently a respect to the arts of ridicule, by which profane men attack the Scriptures concerning the *Messiah*. The derision and scorn shall certainly turn upon themselves at last, as a just retaliation for their making a jest of divine revelation. He that sitteth in the Heavens, shall expose them to such disdain and contempt before angels and men; as shall render their punishment in this respect insupportable. As the Rulers and Kings of this earth, with all their authority and *persecuting* rage, have not been able to extirpate that religion which is by inspiration of God; so we may be assured, that God will not give up his truth, and his cause, to derision and *contempt*. A very great support, this, to all that truly believe the word of God, That derision and contempt shall as certainly be requited, as persecuting wrath. Then shall the proceedings of infidel, and papal power and scorn, be disgraced and punished for ever. Therefore

2. We should learn from what has been said, to place our *Wisdom* in believing and

* Psal. ii. beginning.

obeying the *word of God*, and to treat every thing *as folly* that would draw us off from this.

It is not what passeth for wisdom, among those who receive the Scriptures only to wrest and corrupt them, and to serve their own temporal views and interests by them, that is to be credited as the wisdom of God: Not that which is cried up for wisdom by one set of men only, or in one view of life, that we should please ourselves with: But such wisdom as God declares, he will own and justify before the whole world, upon a thoro' examination of all things according to his word, when all the actions of our lives are laid together, and considered in their final issue.

It is a small thing to be judged of *men's judgment*, who are continually accusing one another of *folly*, in almost all their differences and debates, especially in matters of religion. The Day is coming, that will fully make manifest what is wise, and what is foolish. Those whom God approves, will be applauded for their wisdom, and made happy. Those whom God condemns, according to the rule of judgment which he declares he will go by, shall then stand self-condemned; Who shall be reproached by them also, that are under the same condemnation.

They that are found to have preferr'd a kingdom and portion upon *earth*, above the joys and honours of immortality in heaven,
will

will then very justly be told "They have had their reward." They that have suffer'd themselves to be imposed on, by *loving* the praise of *men* more than the praise of God; or by giving way to a *fear* of men, who could only hurt them in this bodily life, more than to the fear of him who is able to destroy soul and body in hell; both one and t'other of these, shall be condemned to take their lot with hypocrites and unbelievers, under endless stings and confusion of soul. They that have gone knowingly into those evil ways, against which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, and that go on without repentance to accompany with sinners in these ways, shall perish without pity; because they have rejected the counsel of God, and in so doing have chosen *death* rather than *life*. If no experience of the mischiefs of infidelity, and the evil of sin, will teach men true wisdom, and a reverence to God's word, they must have their portion in a *lake* that burns with *fire* and *brimstone*, however incredible 'tis now thought that there should be such a place of abode.

It is therefore of the utmost importance to us, not to judge of wisdom or folly, by the advantages or disadvantages of life, or by the estimate and fashions of this world, or by any party-views and humours of men; but by consulting, and keeping to, the unerring word of God. All flesh that walks upon this earth, is as withering and perishing as the grass that

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grows

grows upon it; and all the glory of man, is like the glory of a fading *flower*; but he that *doth the will of God* endureth for ever, In this therefore let us place our wisdom.

3. Serious and good men should learn, not to *envy the foolish*, nor to say and do any thing needlessly to *provoke their folly*.

The latter part of this inference, the verse after the text suggests to us: "He that reproveth a sinner getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner lest he hate thee." They that make a jest of the Scriptures, ought rather to be forsaken, than argued with; for such debates, in common conversation, serve only to provoke their mouths to pour out foolishness, and to blot the characters of those who have been the excellent of the earth.

And as to *envying* the worldly fame or prosperity of scornful men, this we are taught to watch against. *David* acknowledges it to have been great ignorance, that he was once *envious at the foolish*, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. This he afterward ascribeth to his own sensual and *brutish relishes* of things; as he himself stileth them. But when his judgment was form'd in God's sanctuary, and rectified by the word of God in its account of *the end* of these men, then all his *envy ceased*. See his account of this in the

the lxxiii Psalm. And in another *Psalm* he thus warneth others, — “ Fret not thy self
 “ because of evil-doers, neither be thou en-
 “ vious against the workers of iniquity : For
 “ they shall soon be cut down as the grass,
 “ and wither as the green herb *.” How
 many have we our selves seen, thus blasted and
 perishing, in the midst of prosperity, through
 their own foolishness and disregard to the
 counsels of God !

The envying such men's prosperity, and
 fretting at their success, has brought much of
 their foolishness into the Churches of Christ,
 and into the conversation of Christians, and
 hath grievously perverted the right ways of
 the Lord.

To cure this, (if we can do any thing by
 our own testimony, and fervent prayers) let
 us heartily set our selves. Let us converse
 much with our *Bibles*, and by a sound faith
 often look to the *end of all things*. And let
 us seriously consider that the *time is short*, and
 that the end of it may not be very far from
 every one of us. Then think, how the scene
 will be changed from what it now is, when
 the righteous shall stand in great boldness be-
 fore the face of such as have afflicted him,
 and made no account of his labours to serve
 the cause of God and religion in this life,
 There is a Book ascribed to the author of the
 text I am upon, that hath described in a very

* Psal. xxxvii. 1, 2.

moving style, the future salvation of them that on account of their religion are despised in this world, with the future terror and confusion that shall be the portion of their despisers. And with this I close. When they that made no account of the righteous here, shall see them approved and honoured hereafter, " They shall be troubled with terrible
 " fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of
 " his salvation, so far beyond all that they look'd
 " for. They then repenting, and groaning for
 " anguish of spirit, shall say within them-
 " selves, This was he whom we had some-
 " times in derision, and a proverb of reproach.
 " We fools accounted his life madness, and
 " his end to be without honour. How is
 " he numbered among the children of God,
 " and his Lot is among the saints *!" The
 unbelievers and the uncharitable shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal; JESUS CHRIST himself being constituted Judge, " who is over all God
 " blessed for ever." Amen.

* Wisdom of Solomon, ch. v. 2—5.

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